

Successful Extended Speaking Activities

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Examples of Real Life Communication replicated in extended speaking activities

- Entertainment
- Giving and Receiving Information
- Survival
- Solving Problems
- Sharing Opinions
- Forming and maintaining friendships

What's Good About using extended speaking activities?

- A reactive rather than a prescriptive approach – students activate / gain the language THEY need in order to complete the activity.
- Students achieve a real sense of progress.
- Focuses on a **variety** of real language / lexis rather than just being a vehicle designed to practice one grammar structure
- Provides personalisation / individualisation
- Can reflect the real world
- Motivating and challenging for the students
- A natural opportunity for revision of previously covered language
- Students work at their own level – this approach therefore works well with mixed ability groups.

Possible stages of setting up and managing an extended speaking activity:

- a) The teacher provides a model of the activity that the students are to perform, and sets listening task(s). This could be a live listening done by the teacher or a recording from a coursebook.
- b) The teacher focuses on useful language from the model, and allowing students practice of it.
- c) Students plan what they are going to say - could be individually or in pairs or groups. Teacher on hand as a 'language resource' to help and supply language as required.
- d) Students rehearse the activity – again, teacher on hand to help out with language.
- e) Students perform the activity “for real”, ideally with a different group / partner. The teacher listens and discreetly makes notes for feedback.

- f) Feedback / Focus on: (i) Task achievement; (ii) Language – Examples of ‘good’ language used along with errors.
- g) Follow up work on areas of language identified as needing development.

With extended speaking activities, the pressure is on the teacher to monitor carefully and effectively, to react to what is said (or written) and to then select appropriate language areas to focus on after the task. It is sometimes helpful to split an extended speaking lesson over two separate lessons, giving the teacher time to decide what language from the task to focus on and how.

Reactive language focus – some tips.

The reactive language focus could be argued to be the most important part of an extended speaking activity. This is where the teacher feeds back and responds to the language used by the students during the activity, and in doing so provides the opportunity for real learning to occur. Sometimes referred to as ‘error correction’ – but in fact much more than that, this is where the students are engaged in furthering their English by being encouraged to investigate ways in which what they did could be done more effectively in the future.

1. Just before the activity is concluded, transfer your list of ‘good language and errors collected during the activity to the board.
2. Feed back on the **content**. Provide ‘closure’ to the activity and find out the outcome of the communication. Interesting? Successful? Goals achieved? etc...
3. Feed back on **language**. Give students thinking time before eliciting anything in response to what you have put up on the board.
 - (i) Elicit corrections to **errors**. Do not refer to the individual student(s) who made them – avoid embarrassment! It can sometimes be helpful in this respect to ‘disguise’ the error – retain the problem area but use different vocabulary so that individual students do not feel ‘put on the spot’ by seeing what they said verbatim on the board for all to see.
 - (ii) Highlight examples of **good** language. It’s a good idea to try and pick up examples of successful language from weaker students here – and to credit them accordingly – good for encouragement / motivation.

Some criteria for choosing language to feed back on:

1. Is it easy to correct?
2. Is it useful language?
3. How many students made the error?
4. Is it related to language already covered in the course, or is it ‘new’ language?